



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### *The Road Less Traveled*

*All-Terrain Vehicle Fatalities — West Virginia, 1999–2006*

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*[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.*

[Susan Aydlotte] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm Susan Aydlotte, your host for this week.

Taking the road less traveled can be exciting, but without the proper training and precautions, it could be deadly. All-terrain vehicles are all the rage in the U.S., especially in rural areas, where the four-wheeled motorized bikes are often used to access mountain trails or other rugged terrain. ATVs are also being used on paved roads, and because of their open design, they provide little or no protection if they crash or rollover. A West Virginia study found that 250 people died in ATV crashes in a recent eight-year period; over half of these crashes occurred on public roads. Dr. Aron Hall is an EIS Officer with CDC. He's joining us today by phone to discuss the dangers of ATVs. Welcome to the show, Dr. Hall.

[Dr. Hall] Thank you for having me.

[Susan Aydlotte] Dr. Hall, what led you to study this problem, and why the focus on West Virginia?

[Dr. Hall] Well, we decided to study all-terrain vehicle fatalities here in West Virginia because, since the 1990s, West Virginia has led the United States in per capita death rates from ATVs, with rates that have been eight times higher than the national average. So, it's a problem that we've seen, you know, on a national scale, but West Virginia in particular has shown a more dramatic increase in these fatalities. And over the last five years in particular, West Virginia has been number one in just the number of deaths due to all-terrain vehicle crashes in the United States, despite having a very low population.

[Susan Aydlotte] So, overall in the United States, do you know how many people are injured or killed while operating ATVs every year?

[Dr. Hall] Well, the estimates on this vary somewhat, but according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, over the last five years, there have been about 600 deaths due to ATV crashes per year.

[Susan Aydlotte] What's the most common cause of injury or death?

[Dr. Hall] That's a good question and one that we tried to address in a follow-up study where we teamed up with medical examiners in the state to address specific injuries incurred. We found that head injuries and compression injuries, resulting from vehicle rollover and subsequently the driver becoming pinned underneath the vehicle, were the most common types of injuries.

[Susan Aydlotte] What has West Virginia done to address this problem?

[Dr. Hall] Well, in 2004, the first attempt to really address the problem from a regulatory standpoint was taken when the first legislation to regulate ATV use was enacted. And this legislation had provisions that were targeting ATV use on paved roads. It prohibited ATV use on a certain type of paved road. It also had provision trying to protect children under the age of eighteen by requiring helmet use and rider training before use.

[Susan Aydlotte] Is there a movement to regulate ATV use in the United States?

[Dr. Hall] Well, the regulation of ATV use is very state-specific; it tends to be governed by state regulations. So, from one state to the next, there's considerable variability in what's allowed regarding ATV use and what isn't. However, there have been some national guidelines proposed. For example, the American Academy of Pediatrics put forth some recommendations in 2000 which offered specific guidelines for legislation to regulate ATV use. They recommend that all children under the age of sixteen years be prohibited from using ATVs, the argument being that children under that age just don't have the coordination to operate that type of vehicle much the same as they wouldn't a regular motor vehicle or car. Likewise, they also recommend prohibiting ATV use on all public highways, which is consistent with manufacturers' recommendations.

[Susan Aydlotte] What safety precautions can you recommend to ATV riders?

[Dr. Hall] Well, certainly we'd recommend before using an ATV that riders receive appropriate training. These are powerful vehicles with strong engines, and appropriate training in their use is essential to safely using them. Absolutely, riders and passengers should be wearing helmets when operating these vehicles, and obviously, people should not be operating these vehicles if they're under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

[Susan Aydlotte] Where can our listeners get more information about ATV safety?

[Dr. Hall] A good website that the Consumer Product Safety Commission has put together is called [www.atvsafety.gov](http://www.atvsafety.gov), and this website actually has state-specific information regarding the regulations that would apply in your state, as well as statistics specific to your state, as far as injuries and deaths.

[Susan Aydlotte] Dr. Hall, thanks for sharing this information with our listeners today.

[Dr. Hall] Well, thank you for having me.

[Susan Aydlotte] Well, that's it for this week's show. Be sure and join us next week. Until then, be well. This is Susan Aydlotte for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.